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PCSW

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

The State's leading force for women's equality since 1973.

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**Testimony of
Teresa C. Younger
Executive Director
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Transportation Committee
February 13, 2013**

Re: H.B. No. 6038 AN ACT REQUIRING THE USE OF GENDER-NEUTRAL "PEOPLE AT WORK" SIGNS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Senators Maynard and Boucher, Representatives Guerrera and Scribner, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) regarding H.B. 6038, An Act Requiring The Use of Gender-Neutral "People at Work" Signs by the Department of Transportation.

The PCSW supports the concepts behind HB 6038, requiring gender neutral signs by the Dept. of Transportation. This proposal was brought to our attention by 11-year-old Isabella Glynn, reminding us about the inadvertent messages that are sent regarding gender expectations -- even in 2013.

The PCSW has long recognized the importance of what language says and implies. In 1974, one year after our inception, we worked to ensure gender neutral language in our State statutes. This project was consistent with our mandate to eliminate gender discrimination. In 1991, we worked with the Connecticut DOT and the University of Connecticut to conduct a survey of women working in highway construction. The outcome of that survey served as a basis for recruiting and training women in nontraditional occupations.

We are familiar with CT DOT's current policy to ensure its signs are currently gender neutral; however, this policy does not carry over to municipalities. While we are sensitive to the budgeting constraints and unfunded mandate of municipalities we would like to see, policies as enlightened as those of the CT DOT in force on the municipal level as well.

The need for gender-neutral language is widely recognized by colleges and many corporations; it is only right that government be at the vanguard of moving toward more equitable presentation of simple commands and instructions. After all, it is no more expensive to write "Work Zone" than it is "Men at Work." No one loses anything by this perception shift, and much is gained. And, as signage ages out, replacing the templates with different language should be a simple matter.